

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

OF

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FOR

LARGE SCALE POLARIZER AND POLARIZER SYSTEM

EMPLOYING IT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

A. Field of the Invention

A The present invention relates to a polarizer and a polarizer system, and more particularly to a large scale polarizer and a polarizer system employing the large scale polarizer.

5 B. Description of the Related Art

Generally, a liquid crystal display device (LCD) comprises upper and lower substrates placed to face each other with a specific interval ^{formed} by a spacer, and a liquid crystal (LC) layer formed between the upper and lower substrates. The upper and lower substrates respectively have electrodes with specific patterns on their faced sides. And an alignment layer is formed over the electrodes to impart a pretilt angle on the LC.

For aligning the alignment layer, ^{methods such as} ~~it has been proposed to use~~ a rubbing method, a photo-alignment method ^{and have been proposed} ~~or the like.~~

The rubbing method comprises depositing an alignment material, such as polyimide (PI), on a substrate and imparting the pretilt on the LC by rubbing the substrate with a rubbing cloth. Using this method, it is possible to make a large scale LCD and to align the alignment layer relatively quickly.

In the above described rubbing process, however, defects are generated by the microgrooves of the alignment layer which cause a light scattering and a random phase distortion. Moreover, dust particles and electrostatic discharge are produced in the alignment layer, so that a thin film transistor of the substrate is damaged and the yield is decreased.

On the other hand, the photo-alignment method imparts the pretilt on the LC by irradiating an ultraviolet light over a substrate having a photo-alignment layer. Compared with

the rubbing method, there is no electrostatic discharge or dust particles, and thus the low yield problem is obviated. Moreover, it could control simultaneously the pretilt throughout the alignment layer, and this uniformly arrange the LC molecules. Therefore, there are several advantages, including preventing the random phase distortion or the light scattering from defects generated by the microgrooves.

At this time, to obtain a linearly or a partially polarized ultraviolet light, a polarizer polarizing an incident light from a light source is used. Particularly, ~~the characteristics of the~~ polarizer used in the photo-alignment process require that it be possible to apply ⁱⁿ to the large scale, to use in the ultraviolet light range, and to have ^{high} an endurance, a heat resistance and a ~~high~~ light-transmittance.

In the conventional polarizer, however, because it is small, it is difficult to apply to the photo-alignment process of a large scale LCD. ^{In} ~~And in~~ the case of the polarizer having an ^{the polarizer} ~~absorptive~~ ^{absorption} mode on which polymers are deposited, the endurance and heat resistance properties are poor, the wavelength of incident light is limited.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, an object of the present invention ^{is} to provide a large scale polarizer ^{with} securing an uniformity of the illuminance thereof, for use in a photo-alignment process ^{during fabrication of} of fabricating a large scale LCD.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a polarizer system employing the large scale polarizer ^{having a simplified} to simplify the process and to simplify a driving system of the polarizer.

Additional objects and advantages of the invention will be set forth in part in the

description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention. The objects and advantages of the invention will be realized and attained by means of the elements and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

5 To achieve the objects and in accordance with the purpose of the invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, the large scale polarizer of the present invention comprises: a plurality of quartz substrate parts, each quartz substrate part including one or more quartz substrates; and a polarizer holder supporting said plurality of quartz substrate parts.

10 In another aspect of the invention, the polarizer system employing the large scale polarizer of the present invention comprises: a light source for generating a light; a plurality of quartz substrate parts, each quartz substrate part including one or more quartz substrates; a polarizer holder supporting said plurality of quartz substrate parts; and means for directing said light onto said plurality of quartz substrate parts.

15 It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only and are not restrictive of the invention, as claimed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

20 The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

Fig. 1 is a graph showing a light transmittance characteristic of quartz and glass.

Fig. 2A shows polarization characteristics of a polarizer comprising one quartz substrate.

Figs 2B and 2C are graphs showing polarization characteristics of the polarizer shown in Fig 2A.

Fig. 3A shows polarization characteristics of a polarizer comprising two or more layers of quartz substrate.

Figs. 3B and 3C are graphs showing polarization characteristics of the polarizer shown in Fig. 3A.

Fig. 4A is a plan view of a large scale polarizer according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 4B is a graph showing a polarizing characteristic of the large scale polarizer shown in Fig. 4A.

Fig. 5A shows a polarizer system employing the large scale polarizer shown in Fig. 4A.

Fig. 5B is a graph showing polarization characteristics of the polarizer system shown in the Fig 5A.

Fig. 6 is a plan view of a large scale polarizer according to ^{another} ~~other~~ embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 7 is a plan view of a large scale polarizer according to ^a ~~further~~ embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 8 shows a polarizer system employing the large scale polarizer shown in Fig. 6 or 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

Reference will now be made in detail to the present preferred embodiments of the

invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. Whenever possible, the same reference numbers will be used throughout the drawings to refer to the same or like parts.

Generally, a light used in a photo-alignment process is an ultraviolet light, and more particularly a light used as a polarized light is an ultraviolet light having a wavelength approximately between 280 nm and 320 nm. Fig. 1 is a graph showing a light transmittance characteristic of quartz and glass. As shown in the figure, from the light transmittance characteristics point of view, a quartz is more preferable than a glass.

As shown in Fig. 2A, in the region irradiated by an unpolarized parallel light, a quartz substrate 1 is placed at the Brewster's θ_B angle with the incident light (that is, the normal of quartz substrate 1 and the incident light ~~make~~ ^{are at} the Brewster's angle θ_B), ~~and the~~ ^{. The} light transmitted by quartz substrate 1 ~~becomes~~ ^{is} a partially polarized light and the light reflected by quartz substrate 1 ~~becomes~~ ^{is} a linearly polarized light. In Fig. 2A, the sign \odot indicates an S wave, that is, an S polarized light. I_s represent the intensity of the S wave. The sign \uparrow represents a P wave, that is, a P polarized light. In Figs. 2B and 2C, θ is the angle between a normal line of quartz substrate 1 and the incident light.

~~The~~ ^A ~~At this time, the~~ Brewster's angle θ_B is described as follows. If the unpolarized light is incident on the surface of quartz substrate 1 at the Brewster's angle, the reflected light is made linearly polarized with the electric vector transverse to the plane of incidence. The transmitted light is partially polarized.

Fig. 2B is a graph showing a polarization degree of the light transmitted by quartz substrate 1, and Fig. 2C is a graph showing a polarization degree of the light reflected by quartz

substrate 1.

As shown in Fig. 2B, the light transmitted by quartz substrate 1 ^{is} becomes a partially polarized light in which a P polarized light I_p is greater than I_s at the Brewster's angle θ_B .

Further, as shown in Fig. 2C, the light reflected by quartz substrate 1 ^{is} becomes a linearly polarized light in which only ^{an} S polarized light I_s exists at the Brewster's angle θ_B .

On the other hand, as shown in Fig. 3A, in the region irradiated by an unpolarized parallel light, a layered quartz substrate 11, comprising one or more layers of quartz substrates, is placed to have the Brewster's angle θ_B ^{All} and ^{the} all of the light transmitted and reflected by layered quartz substrate 11 become linearly polarized. In Fig 3A, the sign \uparrow represents a P wave, that is, a P polarized light, I_p is the intensity of the P wave. ^{and} ^{The} and the sign \odot represents an S polarized light I_s ^{to the} and θ is the an angle between a normal ^{line of} layered quartz substrate 11 and the incident light.

As shown in Fig. 3B, the light transmitted through layered quartz substrate 11 ^{is} becomes a linearly polarized light in which only the P polarized light I_p exists at the Brewster's angle θ_B . Further, as shown in Fig. 2C, the light reflected by quartz substrate 1 ^{is} becomes a linearly polarized light in which only a S polarized light I_s exists at the Brewster's angle θ_B .

As previously mentioned, when the number of the quartz substrates a linearly polarized light. Hence, it is possible to obtain a linearly or a partially polarized light easily by controlling the number of the quartz substrates.

Fig. 4A is a plan view of a large scale polarizer 10 according to an implementation of the present invention.

Large scale polarizer 10 comprises one or more quartz substrate parts 15 formed as a rectangle, and polarizer holders 13 formed as a lattice structure supporting quartz substrate part

15.

Each quartz substrate part 15 comprises one or more layers of quartz substrates, polarizes an incident light, and is positioned at the Brewster's angle against the incident light. Polarizer holder 13 includes an optically absorptive material. The marks a and b represent the interval between adjacent polarizer holders 13 in X axis and Y axis.

Compared with the conventional polarizer, in the present large scale polarizer, a plurality of quartz substrate parts 15 are linked by polarizer holders 13 like a lattice structure, and it is possible to apply to a large scale LCD.

Fig. 4B is a graph showing polarizing characteristics of the large scale polarizer shown in Fig. 4A, and shows also a sectional view taken along the line I-II of the large scale polarizer.

As shown in Fig. 4B, quartz substrate part 15 is formed between each polarizer holder 13 to have a Brewster's angle θ_B against the unpolarized parallel light ^{incident} ~~of incidence~~. Thus, the light ^{incident} ~~of incidence~~ is normal to the surface of polarizer holder 13 and hence, quartz substrate part 15 forms the Brewster's angle relative to the normal to the surface of polarizer holder 13.

Among the unpolarized parallel lights ^{incident} ~~of incidence~~, the light reflected by quartz substrate part 15 is absorbed by polarizer holder 13, and the light transmitted by quartz substrate part 15 is irradiated over an alignment layer 50 (see Fig. 5A). At this time, polarizer holder 13 includes an optically absorptive material, and preferably includes a material whose optical absorptivity is almost 100%.

In large scale polarizer 10, the polarization degree needed is obtained by controlling the number of layers of the quartz substrates in quartz substrate part 15. Therefore, if it is desired to obtain a linearly polarized light according to a characteristic of the photo-alignment, the quartz

substrate part is formed by using layers of quartz substrate having over a specific number of
quartz ^{substrates} ~~substrate~~. And, to obtain a partially polarized light, the quartz substrate part is formed of
one or any appropriate number of quartz substrates.

Furthermore, since the large scale polarizer consistent with the present invention, as
compared with the conventional polarizer, does not select an absorption mode, it should be
possible ^{for} ~~to~~ use semi-permanently, its endurance is good, and there is no dependence of
wavelength.

As shown in Fig. 4B, as to large scale polarizer 10, the illuminance of the light
transmitted by the large scale polarizer is uneven according to the position on alignment layer 50
caused by polarizer holder 13. That is, the illuminance is relatively high in the middle of quartz
substrate part 15; the illuminance is low near polarizer holder 13; and the incident light is not
transmitted directly underneath polarizer holder 13.

Fig. 5A shows a polarizer system employing large scale polarizer 10 shown in Fig. 4A.

A light from a lamp 7 is reflected by a cold mirror 61 onto a small scale polarizer 20,
focused by a fly eye lens (homogenizer) 31, and transmitted by another small scale polarizer 40.
The light is reflected again by a reflective mirror 63 onto a collimation lens, the light
recollimated and focused becomes an unpolarized parallel light. The unpolarized parallel light is
incident at the Brewster's angle θ_B on the quartz substrate part of large scale polarizer 10. ^A ~~And a~~
part of the light is reflected, ^{while another} ~~and other~~ part of the light is transmitted and irradiated over an
alignment layer 50 on a substrate 70 supported on a stage 75 after passing ^{through} a mask 80. Moreover,
the polarizer system further comprises a first ^{movement} ~~moving~~ control part 90a ^{part that moves} ~~moving~~ the large scale
polarizer in the X axis direction and second ^{movement} ~~moving~~ control part 90b ^{that makes} ~~moving~~ the large scale

polarizer in the Y axis direction in Fig. 4A during the photo-alignment stage. Although only one configuration and one set of components are described hereinabove (such as cold mirror and fly eye lense), many other configurations and components may be substituted, as needed.

To obtain the uniformity of the illuminance of the light irradiated on alignment layer 50, it is preferable ^{to place the} ~~that~~ large scale polarizer 10 ~~is placed~~ having a specific interval from alignment layer 50. This is because the polarizer holder makes the illuminance of the light reaching ~~on~~ the alignment layer uneven depending on the position as shown in Fig. 4B.

Fig. 5B is a graph showing polarization characteristics of the polarizer system shown in the Fig. 5A.

When first ^{the} ~~moving~~ ^{MOVEMENT} control part 90a makes ^{the} large scale polarizer 10 move in a specific direction (for example, along the X axis in Fig. 4A) at a specific distance during the photo-alignment stage, as shown in Fig. 5B, the illuminance of alignment layer 50 is made uniform in the whole position along the X axis. In Fig. 5B, the curved line represents an illuminance ^{at} ~~in~~ a specific point during the photo-alignment process, and the dotted line represents an average illuminance over the whole photo-alignment process. ^{Label} ~~Mark~~ a is distance between the adjacent polarizer holders on the X axis.

Therefore, in connection with performing the photo-alignment process using the polarizer system employing the large scale polarizer, when the distance between the adjacent polarizer holders along the X axis is a, first ^{MOVEMENT} ~~moving~~ control part 90a oscillates large scale polarizer 10 for a distance of $a \pm \delta$ ($\delta \ll a$) one or more times along the X axis during the photo-alignment stage. In the same manner, when the distance between the adjacent polarizer holders along the Y axis is b, second ^{MOVEMENT} ~~moving~~ control part 90b oscillates large scale polarizer 10 ^{to} move in one way for a distance

of $b \pm \delta$ ($\delta \ll b$) one or more times along the Y axis during the photo-alignment stage.

Accordingly, when the large scale polarizer moves in the manner described above, the uneven illuminance shown in Fig. 4B is made uniform.

Although Fig. 5B shows only the sectional view taken along the X axis of Fig. 4A, the same results are observed in the sectional view taken along the Y axis.

Fig. 6 is a plan view of a large scale polarizer according to another embodiment of the present invention.

In Fig. 6, a large scale polarizer 100 comprises one or more quartz substrate parts 105 formed as a triangle, and a polarizer holder 103 supporting quartz substrate part 105. Quartz substrate part 105 comprises one or more layers of quartz substrate, and the quartz substrate parts are linked in one direction.

With the above triangular configuration, large scale polarizer 100 obtains a uniform illuminance by scanning only along the X axis. For example, although it scans in lengths of L along the X axis, the whole area irradiated is given equally the effects of the boundary line between the quartz substrate parts (an area of width of W in the figure), and the non-irradiated area by the polarizer holder is covered evenly.

Fig. 7 is a plan view of a large scale polarizer according to another embodiment of the present invention.

A large scale polarizer 110 comprises one or more quartz substrate parts 115 formed in a parallelogram configuration, and a polarizer holder 113 supporting quartz substrate part 115. Quartz substrate part 115 comprises one or more layers of quartz substrate, and the quartz substrate parts are linked in one direction.

With the above parallelogram configuration, large scale polarizer 110 obtains a uniform illuminance by moving only along the X axis. For example, although it scans in lengths of L along the S axis, the whole area irradiated is given equally the effects of the boundary line between the quartz substrate parts (an area of width of W in the figure), and the non-irradiated area by the polarizer holder is covered evenly. Moreover, compared with quartz substrate part 105 in Fig. 6, this quartz substrate parts 115 of the parallelogram are assembled more easily.

Fig. 8 shows a polarizer system employing the large scale polarizer shown in Fig. 6 or 7.

A light from a lamp 7 is reflected by a cold mirror 61 onto a small scale polarizer 20, focused by a fly eye lens (homogenizer) 31, and transmitted through another small scale polarizer 40. The light is reflected again by a reflective mirror 63 onto a collimation lens 30, the light recollimated and focused becomes an unpolarized parallel light. The unpolarized parallel light is incident at the Brewster's angle θ_B on the quartz substrate part of large scale polarizer 100 (or 110) (see the Figs. 6 and 7). And a part of the light is reflected, and ^{another} ~~other~~ part of the light is transmitted and irradiated over an alignment layer 50 on a substrate 70 supported on a stage 75 after passing through a mask 80. And, a ^{MOVEMENT} ~~moving~~ control part 90 is connected with and moves the large scale polarizer.

A part of the light is reflected, and ^{another} ~~other~~ part of the light is transmitted and irradiated over alignment layer 50. ^{MOVEMENT} ~~Moving~~ control part 90 makes the large scale polarizer move in the X axis direction during the irradiation of the photo-alignment layer (refer to Figs. 6 and 7).

In the above polarizer system of Fig. 6 or 7, because the structure of the quartz substrate used is a triangle or a parallelogram, a uniform illuminance could be obtained by moving in only one direction along either the X or Y direction, the direction being perpendicular to the polarizer

Note
A
A
holder. Therefore, one-directional movement reduces the number of the processes, and as a result, the number of the ~~moving~~ ^{MOVEMENT} control parts needed is fewer, ~~and then~~ ^{which reduces} the cost of manufacture ~~is reduced.~~

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Moreover, although the polarizer systems shown in Figs. 5A and 8 have one large scale polarizer and two small scale polarizers in front and ~~behind~~ ^{near} of the fly eye lens, it is possible to use one, two or all of them depending on the situation. The number and position of the polarizers are flexible. For example, in the case of using one polarizer, the polarizer may be placed at 10 (100), 20 or 40 in Figs. 5A and 8. In the case of using two polarizers, the polarizers may be placed at 10 (100) and 20, 20 and 40, or 10 (100) and 40 in Figs. 5A and 8. When three polarizers are used, polarizers may be placed at 10 (100), 20 and 40 in Figs. 5A and 8.

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It is further understood by those skilled in the art that the foregoing description is a preferred embodiment of the disclosed device, and that various changes and modifications may be made in the invention without departing from the spirit and scope thereof.

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It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the polarizer and polarizer system of the present invention and in construction thereof without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention. As an example, while the embodiments discussed above place the polarizer at the Brewster's angle, it need not be at the Brewster's angle. Moreover, the movement of the polarizer is not limited to the particular X and Y directions described above - - it may be moved in any fashion as long as the alignment layer is uniformly irradiated, as needed.

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Other embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. It is intended

that the specification and examples be considered as exemplary only, with a true scope and spirit of the invention being indicated by the following claims.